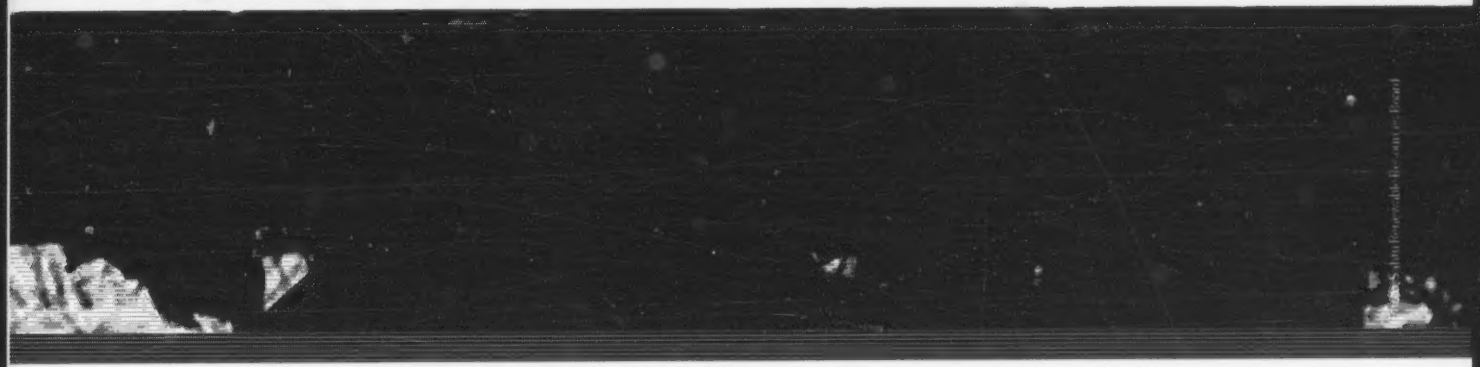
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



OVERVIEW

In 1997, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) established a government-wide Traditional Knowledge Policy, currently referred to as Traditional Knowledge Policy 53.03. According to this Policy:

> The Government recognizes that aboriginal traditional knowledge is a valid and essential source of information about the natural environment and its resources, the use of natural resources, and the relationship of people to the land and to each other, and will incorporate traditional knowledge into government decisions and actions where appropriate.

The Traditional Knowledge Policy calls upon the GNWT to adhere to the following principles:

- the primary responsibility for the preservation and promotion of traditional knowledge lies with Aboriginal people;
- government programs and services should be administered in a manner consistent with the beliefs, customs, knowledge, values and languages of the people being served;
- traditional knowledge should be considered in the design and delivery of government programs and services;
- the primary focus of traditional knowledge research should be the Aboriginal community;
- traditional knowledge is best preserved through continued use and practical application;
- oral tradition is a reliable source of information about traditional knowledge.

Northwest Territories

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) has two distinct and significant obligations under the Traditional Knowledge Policy that do not necessarily apply to other departments. The first is to coordinate government-wide traditional knowledge initiatives that have been approved by the Executive Council. The second is to "ensure that traditional knowledge about the natural environment is taken into consideration in all environmental management actions and decisions of the government."

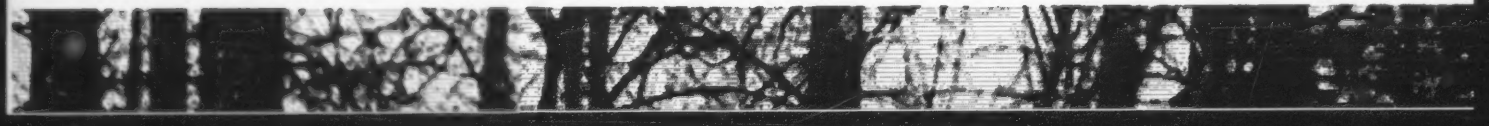
Photo: Aditi Bhaverade, Resource Board

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources recently reviewed its role and obligations under the Traditional Knowledge Policy and determined that formal implementation planning would expand and strengthen the application of traditional knowledge within the department and within the government generally. This review process helped inform the development, with other GNWT departments, of a GNWT-wide Traditional Knowledge Policy Implementation Framework and the establishment of an Interdepartmental Traditional Knowledge Working Group, coordinated by ENR.

Given its special role and responsibilities under the Traditional Knowledge Policy, ENR has also developed its own internal implementation plan to guide ENR traditional knowledge initiatives. This plan is consistent with the GNWT Traditional Knowledge Policy Implementation Framework and addresses the following key priorities identified in that Framework:

- better overall coordination of Traditional Knowledge Policy implementation;
- more consistent orientation, awareness, and training opportunities relating to traditional knowledge;
- development of stronger and more effective collaborative relationships with the holders of traditional knowledge, through their Aboriginal governments, cultural institutes, and resource management agencies;
- greater acknowledgement and promotion of successful traditional knowledge initiatives;
- ongoing departmental support and guidance to personnel with respect to traditional knowledge implementation issues;
- clear commitment of the resources required to implement the Traditional Knowledge Policy; and
- measures to monitor and report on traditional knowledge implementation initiatives.



ENR TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

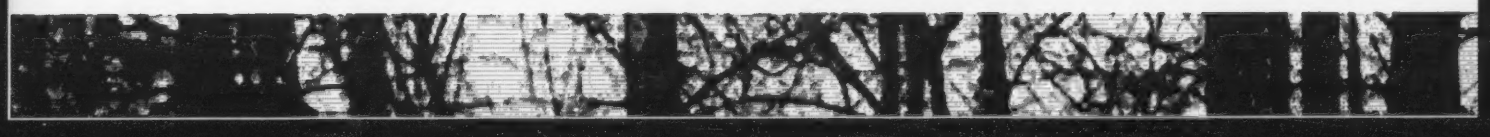
In order to make progress in each of the GNWT's traditional knowledge priority areas, ENR will be carrying out the following implementation activities.

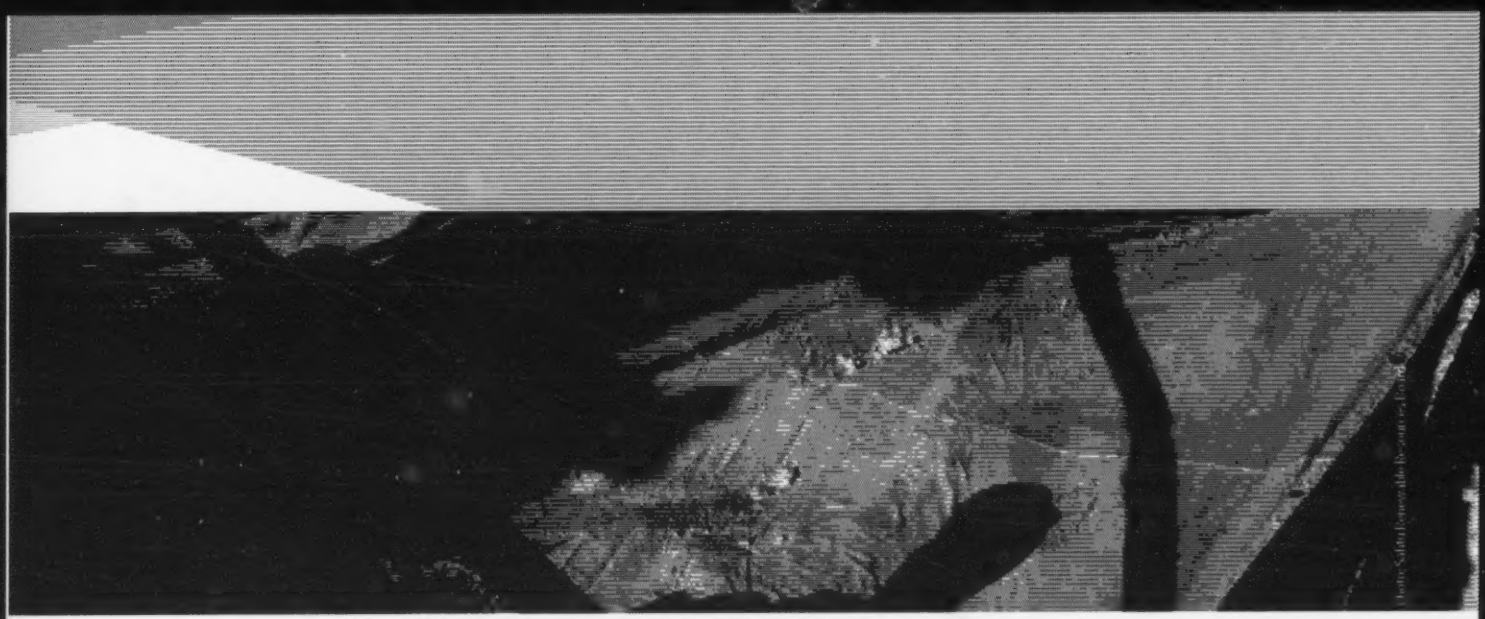
Coordination:
In order to improve the overall coordination of Traditional Knowledge Policy implementation, ENR will:

- Establish a Traditional Knowledge Coordinator position with the mandate and resources required to fulfill ENR's internal and government-wide responsibilities;
- Maintain an internal Traditional Knowledge Working Committee made up of regional and divisional ENR personnel to review and provide advice on implementation issues;
- Coordinate the activities of the GNWT Interdepartmental Traditional Knowledge Working Group.

Awareness and Training:
In order to raise awareness about traditional knowledge perspectives, values, beliefs, and practices and to provide training regarding traditional knowledge research and usage, ENR will:

- Prepare and distribute a 'Traditional Knowledge Policy Orientation' package for ENR and other interested GNWT personnel;
- Identify, encourage, and support cultural, language, and traditional knowledge awareness and mentoring opportunities -- drawing on the knowledge and skills of current ENR personnel to the greatest extent possible;
- Provide orientation and training opportunities relating to traditional knowledge research strategies – through the use of professional development materials and in-house workshops.



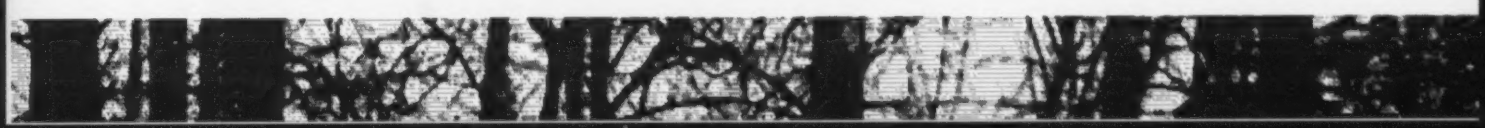


Collaboration:
As an essential component of Traditional Knowledge Policy implementation, ENR will ensure that strong working relationships are established and maintained with the Aboriginal governments, cultural institutes, and resource management agencies that represent the holders of traditional knowledge. To strengthen collaborative relationships, ENR will:

- Ensure that ENR personnel understand existing obligations and/or expectations with respect to the use of traditional knowledge in resource management processes and under land claims legislation and regional Aboriginal government policies;
- Establish and/or maintain traditional knowledge access, sharing, and usage protocols with regional Aboriginal governments and agencies. These protocols will acknowledge and respect cultural ownership and control over traditional knowledge by the holders of this knowledge;
- Engage in collaborative research and planning initiatives with regional Aboriginal governments and agencies, through the regional ENR offices;
- Ensure that traditional language and cultural skills among ENR personnel are fully and appropriately acknowledged, respected, and utilized in collaborative initiatives;
- Ensure that all personnel understand, acknowledge, and respect the importance of the Aboriginal languages to the preservation and transmission of traditional knowledge by incorporating use of these languages, in oral and written form, wherever possible.

Promotion:
Recognizing that ENR has been involved in traditional knowledge initiatives for a number of years, but that information about these initiatives is not regularly acknowledged, shared, or promoted within the department, ENR will:

- Monitor, document, and share information about ENR-related traditional knowledge initiatives, using a variety of media, as a means of raising awareness about these initiatives, promoting 'best practice', and guiding further initiatives;
- Prepare an annual report on ENR traditional knowledge activities;
- Assist other departments, where appropriate, in promoting their own traditional knowledge initiatives.



Support and Guidance:
In order to fully support personnel involved in traditional knowledge initiatives and to promote the greater incorporation of traditional knowledge into its ongoing activities, ENR will:

- Establish and maintain a basic traditional knowledge resource library, with a focus on 'best practice' in the areas of environmental, resource, and wildlife management;
- Prepare and circulate 'best practices' guidelines for ENR personnel involved in collaborative traditional knowledge research and planning initiatives;
- Provide ongoing liaison services and advice to ENR personnel involved in traditional knowledge related initiatives;
- Extend access to these services to other GNWT departments and agencies as requested and where appropriate.

Resource Allocation:
As a formal demonstration of an ongoing financial commitment to the objectives and principles of the Traditional Knowledge Policy and the GNWT Traditional Knowledge Implementation Framework, ENR will:

- Access and allocate the resources required to support the Traditional Knowledge Coordinator position and functions;
- Identify resources to support community-driven traditional knowledge initiatives of mutual interest to the department and Aboriginal governments or agencies.

Accountability:
In order to remain accountable to the Traditional Knowledge Policy and the GNWT Traditional Knowledge Policy Implementation Framework, ENR will:

- Identify and monitor traditional knowledge initiatives as a component of its standard business planning process and other planning activities;
- Establish specific and generalized criteria to assess progress within the department with respect to Traditional Knowledge Policy implementation;
- Work with the Interdepartmental Traditional Knowledge Working Group to enhance accountability for Traditional Knowledge Policy implementation within the GNWT generally;
- Contribute to an annual GNWT report on government-wide traditional knowledge activities.

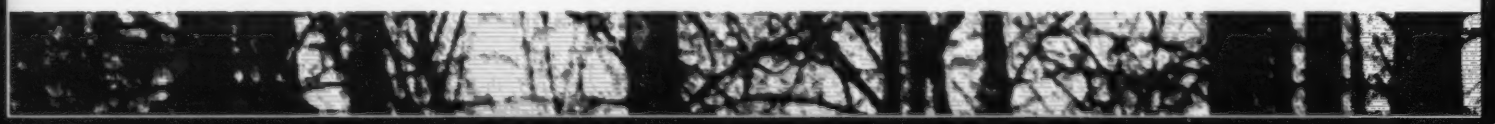
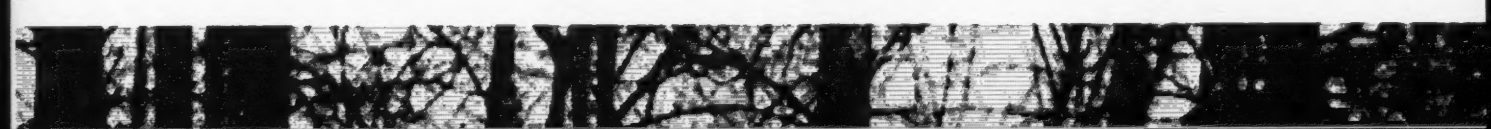


Photo: Sahtu Renewable Resources Board

CURRENT TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

During the recent review process, it became clear that ENR has made significant progress in incorporating traditional knowledge into departmental research, planning, and programming initiatives. Here are some examples of current traditional knowledge related initiatives.

- ENR has taken steps to recruit a relatively high number of Aboriginal employees, many of whom incorporate a traditional cultural perspective to their work – from field operations to senior management levels.
- ENR – in collaboration with the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI) – has supported trapper training and youth ecology camp programming that creates opportunities for the transfer of traditional knowledge and skills from elders and experienced harvesters to youth.
- ENR personnel work closely with regional Aboriginal renewable resource agencies to plan and carry out a wide range of wildlife research, planning, and management activities. This level of direct engagement with regional resource management and regulatory agencies will increase and mature as the role of these agencies expands throughout the NWT.
- ENR personnel are directly involved in collaborative research and planning activities associated with the NWT Protected Areas Strategy (PAS). In the guidelines for cultural, socio-economic, and environmental research, traditional knowledge is identified as a critical and essential component. Considerable traditional knowledge information has been brought to bear on PAS planning and decision-making.
- ENR has coordinated regional and territorial planning workshops and summits that fully involve and incorporate the knowledge and perspectives of elders, harvesters, and other representatives from Aboriginal governments, cultural institutes, and resource management agencies.



CONTACT INFORMATION

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